

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

PAUL BEFORE FELIX.

October 8, 1916.

Acts 24.

Golden Text: "Herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and toward man." Acts 24:16.

"We can picture the scene in the court room of Herod's palace. The governor, Felix, in his gorgeous official regalia, sitting on his throne; on the platform near him would be the high priest of the Jews in his richly colored and jewelled robes; and the lawyer, Tertullus, in his Roman toga; while the elders of the Sanhedrin who had come down from Jerusalem as witnesses against Paul, to confirm the accusations of Tertullus, would be in the same vicinity. On one side were the centurion and his soldiers guarding the prisoner, Paul."

"It was the fifth day after St. Paul's arrival at Caesarea," writes Canon Farrar, "that he was brought to trial. The momentary diversion in his favor, of which by this time the Pharisees were probably ashamed, had settled into a unanimous hatred, and the elders, probably of both parties, hurried down to accuse their adversary. Ananias in person accompanied them, eager for revenge against the man who had compared him to a plastered sepulchre ('whited wall'; and all the more because it was true). It must have been intensely disagreeable to these dignified personages to be forced to hurry on a fatiguing journey of some seventy miles from the religious to the political capital of Judea, in order to induce a Gentile dog to give up an apostate to their jurisdiction; but the Sanhedrists, smarting under defeat, would not be likely to leave any stone unturned which should bring the offender within reach of vengeance."

"They wished to make sure of the extradition of their victim, and being little able to plead in Greek or Latin, and more or less ignorant of the procedure in Roman courts, they gave their brief to a provincial barrister named Tertullus."

"This man was chosen because of his persuasive tongue that could make white seem black; and from the fact that a Roman lawyer would have more influence, as an unbiased man, in a Roman court, and could more easily make it appear that Paul 'was dangerous to the Roman power, and not merely a turbulent and renegade Jew.'—Peloubet.

These words (vs. 2, 3) were addressed by a professional flatterer to one of the worst of the many bad Roman governors of Syria. The speaker knew that he was lying, the listeners knew that the eulogium was undeserved; and among all the crowd of bystanders there was perhaps not a man who did not hate the governor, and would not have been glad to see him lying dead with a dagger in his breast.—McLaren.

Tertullus made three charges against Paul. The first was that he was a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition. The second was that he was the ring-leader of the sect of Nazarenes, and the third that he had profaned the temple. The lawyer arranged these subjects so as to present the one in which the Roman governor would be most interested first, and held back to the last the one in which the Jews were especially interested. He was bold enough to make the charge against the chief captain of the Jewish guard, in order to apologize for this case being brought before the governor. He accuses the

captain of having taken Paul away with great violence, and said that if he had not done this the Jews themselves would have judged him according to their law. When he had finished his speech the Jews who were present were called upon to give their testimony, and they said that the statements that Tertullus had made were true. Paul seems to have had no witness to help him, but the governor gave him the opportunity to speak for himself, and he takes up the charges, one at a time. As was his universal custom he spoke courteous-

there should be a resurrection of the dead both of the just and the unjust. In this faith he made an earnest effort to have always a clear conscience toward God and toward man. Paul's faith controlled his life so that it was without offense toward God and man. The third charge was that he profaned the temple. He said in reply to that, that after many years of absence he came to bring alms to his nation which had been sent by the Christians of other cities, and whilst in Jerusalem he went as a worshipper into the temple, observing the cere-

right, and yet that which would discredit him with the Jews. He was much more concerned about maintaining the good will of the Jewish people than he was about doing what was right or of rendering justice to his prisoner, and so he put off announcing his decision with the excuse that he would wait until Lysias, the chief captain, should come. There was no reason to believe that Lysias was expected or to think he could give any information that had not already been presented to the governor. He showed his belief that Paul was not guilty when he committed him to the care of the centurion, and told him that he was to be permitted to see his friends and to receive from them anything that they might wish to give him. Some days after that Drusilla, Felix's wife, was with him and they sent for Paul in order that they might hear what he had to say concerning the religion of Jesus of Nazareth. Paul now becomes the judge and places the Governor on trial. Instead of defending himself and trying to persuade the governor to let him go, he begins to preach to Felix and Drusilla, as to sinners before God, and reasoned with them of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come. Felix had tempted from her husband, Drusilla, who was the daughter of Herod, and so when Paul began to preach of righteousness it was certainly a very personal matter with them.

He seems to call upon the judge to be righteous in all his judicial acts, and to call upon them both to lead temperate lives instead of the lives of self-indulgence and of sinfulness which they were living, and warns them of the judgment to come, when they must give account of the deeds done in the body. Felix was evidently very much impressed by what was said, but was not willing to confess and give up his sins and go to God for forgiveness. He did as many another man has done, put off the decision to some other time, thinking that it would be more convenient for him to settle the question then, but as is usually the case, the more convenient season never came. One trouble with Felix was that he was dishonest at heart and hoped that Paul would bribe him, in order that he might release him from prison. He did not count upon Paul's thorough honesty, and had no idea that he would prefer to remain in prison rather than to buy his freedom. Again and again did Felix have Paul come and speak to him, but never does he seem to have made any further impression upon him, as he was always looking for the bribe and not for the way of salvation. For two years Paul remained in prison, and Felix at the end of his rule as governor left him a prisoner when Festus took his place. He still hoped that by this he would retain the friendship of the Jews. He feared that they would make charges against him in Rome, because of his evil deeds as governor.

COCKFIGHTS AND SUNDAY-SCHOOLS.

Cockfighting and the Sunday-school go on almost side by side in the Philippines, and at San Leonardo it happened that the owner and his rooster actually went to church during a Sunday-school and evangelistic institute. The man was converted, forthwith gave his rooster away, and was found at Sunday-school the next morning.

At one of the Sunday services a little girl in a red dress wanted to join. The pastor thought her too young. Her parents were opposed to the missionaries, but on Tuesday night the red dress was there beside her father and mother, and all three joined together. "A little child" still leads, "the world over."

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STATE	Population out of S. S.	Amount Wanted
ALABAMA.....	893,752	\$2,673
ARKANSAS.....	697,689	1,413
FLORIDA.....	286,141	1,203
GEORGIA.....	1,071,964	3,423
KENTUCKY.....	948,227	3,292
LOUISIANA.....	803,804	1,404
MISSISSIPPI.....	780,765	2,792
MISSOURI.....	1,063,957	2,296
NORTH CAROLINA.....	806,672	7,710
OKLAHOMA.....	779,694	412
SOUTH CAROLINA.....	592,159	4,271
TENNESSEE.....	862,887	3,543
TEXAS.....	1,473,778	4,975
VIRGINIA.....	718,046	7,926
WEST VIRGINIA.....	504,867	618

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R. E. MAGILL, Secretary, Box 1176, Richmond, Va.

ly to the governor, and said all that he could to gain his good will. He called attention to the fact that Felix had been governor for some years and therefore was in a position to judge wisely of these matters. Taking up the first charge made against him, he shows that this could not have been true, for it was then only twelve days since he went to Jerusalem and he had been in Caesarea five days of that time. He could not have done much in the way of raising a rebellion in seven days, and besides, he claimed that they had not found him disputing with any man nor doing anything to incite the people to rebellion. He calls upon his accusers to prove these charges if they can do so. The second charge he confesses is true in one sense and not true in another. They accuse him of being a ring-leader of the sect of the Nazarenes. He said that he worshipped God in the way which they called heresy, whilst the fact was that he worshipped the God of the Jews, and believed all that was written in the law and the prophets, and that he had the same hope toward God which they professed, that

monial requirements about purification, and he was there quietly engaged in these ceremonies without multitude or tumult, and there it was that the Jews fell upon him. Again he calls upon them to prove the charges which had been made, and said that those Jews making these charges ought to have been present to give their testimony. As they were not there, he turned to those who were present, the chief priests and others, and demanded whether they could say that they had found that he had done any evil when they examined him before the council. He said that there was just one thing which they could charge against him, and that was that he had professed to believe in the doctrine of the resurrection. That was the cause of the tumult which was raised in the council, and that seems to have been the real ground for their complaint against Paul.

Under these conditions there was nothing for any just judge to do but to discharge Paul. Felix realized that the charges against him were not proven, but he did not have the moral courage to do that which he knew was